

# US FOREST SERVICE NORTHWEST MONTANA BACKCOUNTRY AVALANCHE ADVISORY



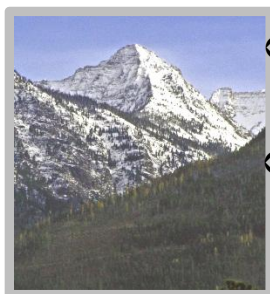
FOR THE GLACIER PARK AND FLATHEAD & KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST AREAS

*Avalanche advisory does not apply to developed ski areas*

**Issue Date:** 8 AM, Friday, January 6, 2012  
**Valid Until:** Midnight, Friday, January 6, 2012  
**Next Update:** Tuesday, January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2012  
**Issued by:** Tony Willits

This advisory is a product of the US Forest Service, US Dept. of Agriculture. Along with other snow and avalanche information, it is originally posted at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/flathead>. An audio summary is available via telephone at 406-257-8402

## Flathead and Glacier Park Ranges



7,500 ft. elevation



5,000 ft.



### Avalanche Danger Summary

**2 - Moderate : 5,000 to 7,500 ft. elevation on steep, open terrain**

**1 - Low : below 5,000**

## AVALANCHE – INSTABILITY DESCRIPTION

**Flathead and Glacier Park Ranges- 5,000 to 7,500 ft. elevation**

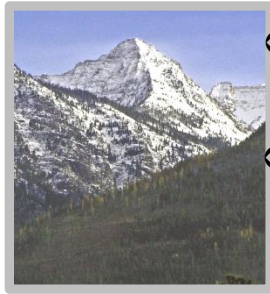
<b>Danger Level</b>	<b>2 - Moderate</b>
<b>Confidence</b>	Good
<b>Travel Advice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heightened avalanche conditions on all steep, open slopes and gullies, especially E, NE, N, &amp; NW aspects</li> <li>• Evaluate snow and terrain carefully</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
<b>Likelihood of Avalanches</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Natural avalanche <b>unlikely</b></li> <li>• Human triggered avalanches <b>possible</b></li> </ul>
<b>Avalanche Size &amp; Distribution</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small avalanches in specific areas or</li> <li>• Larger avalanches in isolated areas</li> <li>• <b>Concern is steep, open slopes and gullies lacking vegetative and terrain anchors</b></li> </ul>

## AVALANCHE – INSTABILITY DESCRIPTION

**Flathead and Glacier Park Ranges - below 5,000 ft. elevation**

<b>Danger Level</b>	<b>1 - LOW</b>
<b>Confidence</b>	Good
<b>Travel Advice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generally safe avalanche conditions exist</li> <li>• Watch for unstable snow on isolated terrain features</li> </ul>
<b>Likelihood of Avalanches</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Both natural and human triggered avalanche <b>unlikely</b></li> </ul>
<b>Avalanche Size &amp; Distribution</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very small avalanches in widespread areas or</li> <li>• Small avalanche in isolated areas</li> </ul>

## Kootenai Ranges



7,500 ft. elevation



5,000 ft.



### Avalanche Danger Summary

**3 -Considerable : 5,000 to 7,500 ft. elevation  
on steep, open terrain**

**2 - Mod : below 5,000**

### AVALANCHE – INSTABILITY DESCRIPTION

**All Mountain Ranges - 5,500 to 7,500 ft. elevation**

Danger Level	3
Confidence	Good
Travel Advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Heightened avalanche conditions on steep, open slopes and gullies</li> <li>Travel in avalanche terrain <b>using careful snowpack evaluation, cautious route-finding, and conservative decision making</b></li> </ul>
Likelihood of Avalanches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Natural avalanche <b>possible</b></li> <li>Human triggered avalanches <b>probable</b></li> </ul>
Avalanche Size & Distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Large avalanches in isolated areas</li> <li><b>Concern is steep, open slopes with little to no anchoring</b></li> </ul>

### AVALANCHE – INSTABILITY DESCRIPTION

**All Mountain Ranges – below 5,500 ft. elevation**

Danger Level	2 - MODERATE
Confidence	Good
Travel Advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Heightened avalanche conditions on steep, open slopes and gullies</li> <li>Watch for unstable snow on isolated terrain features</li> </ul>
Likelihood of Avalanches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Natural avalanches <b>unlikely</b></li> <li>Human triggered avalanches <b>possible</b></li> </ul>
Avalanche Size & Distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Small avalanches in widespread areas</li> </ul>

*Because of the general nature of this advisory message, each backcountry party will always need to make their own time and site specific avalanche hazard evaluations. This advisory best describes conditions at the time of its issuance. As time passes avalanche and snow conditions may change, sometimes quite rapidly. Elevation and geographic distinctions used are approximate and transition zones between hazards exist.*

#### Recent Mountain Weather

<b>Summary</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tuesday –Thursday ---</li> <li>Warming temperatures with little new snow accumulations. Started a cooling trend late Thursday that recorded temperatures into the mid to low 20's.</li> </ul>
<b>Precipitation</b>	<b>Kootenai Area Flathead &amp; GNP</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Very light new snowfall Tuesday through Thursday with SWE increases of 0.2"-0.4" in the Purcells and West Cabinets and to 0.8" in the East Cabinets. Storm finished cold Thursday AM.</li> <li>Light snowfall prior to Thursday with accumulations on Thursday of .2 of an inch, which was comprised mostly of graupel.</li> </ul>
<b>Temperature</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Since Tuesday, temp's remained mild with daytime temperatures well above freezing. Again early Thursday, temperatures started above freezing but started a downward trend into the low to mid 20's.</li> </ul>
<b>Wind</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>W/SW winds picked Thursday morning and were light to moderate at upper ridge tops with snow plumes visible at times.</li> </ul>

#### Field Observation Locations

Thursday, 1-6-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poorman Basin in the East Cabinets, 19 South of Libby</li> <li>Pinnacle Drainage approximately 4 air miles NW of Essex, south of the Middle Fork</li> </ul>
<b>Observer Report Locations</b>	
Thursday, 1-6-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None received</li> </ul>

<b>Avalanches Observed</b>	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No natural releases observed on Thursday.</li> <li>Visibility of surrounding terrain was good from the Poorman observation but marginal from the Pinnacle observation.</li> </ul>
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Instability Concern / Avalanche Problem	Level of Concern	Most★★★    Less★★    Least ★		
New Storm or Near Surface Snow	★	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Kootenai</b>...No new snow since Tuesday AM, except in the <b>East Cabinets</b> where 4" of wet snow fell early Thursday AM. Storm finished cold with graupel showers, depositing 1".</li> <li><b>Flathead and Glacier NP</b>... Only light accumulations with warming and settling.</li> </ul>		
Wind Loading	★	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Kootenai, Flathead and GNP</b>...The last significant wind transport was Wednesday PM at elevations above 6500'. Thursday peak and ridge top winds were 20 mph out of the southwest. Little snow available for transport now.</li> </ul>		
Recent or Persistent Buried Weak Layer	★★	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Kootenai</b>... Snowpack has gradually weakened with the arrival of the warm air mass Tuesday PM. Stress tests revealing Q1 shears with moderate force into the mid pack.</li> <li><b>Flathead and Glacier NP</b>...Persistent weak layers are no doubt harbored within our region's snow pack but warming and settlement has mitigated our past weeks increased hazard. Stress tests on Thursday were revealing Q2 shears with a</li> </ul>		

		moderate to hard force in an extended column test in the surface 20 cms of the snow pack. •
<b>Spring Wet Snow or Melt-Freeze</b>		Not applicable
<b>Rain-on-Snow</b>		Not applicable
<b>Loose Snow</b>		None observed
<b>Other Concerns</b>		Friday – Sunday weather forecasts little storm loading and no wind transport

#### Weather Forecast

[Current NWS Backcountry Forecast](#)

<b>Summary</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Friday – Sunday --- a slow moving northwest flow will bring below freezing temperatures, little moisture and little wind.</li> </ul>
<b>Precipitation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Traces of snow can be expected at mountain locations through Sunday.</li> </ul>
<b>Temperature</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Below freezing temperatures is forecasted Thursday to Sunday.</li> </ul>
<b>Wind</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Light winds 3-8 mph out of the southwest will <b>NOT</b> transport available new snow from Thursday AM.</li> </ul>

#### Avalanche Outlook

<b>Trend</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Flathead and Glacier NP...</b>The avalanche danger is expected to remain at the current level through the weekend.</li> <li><b>Kootenai...</b> Avalanche risk has stalled since Tuesday AM with the arrival of a warm air mass. Avalanche risk can be expected to decline slowly dependent upon the weather forecast for the arrival of below freezing temps day and night</li> </ul>
<b>Concern</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Kootenai, Flathead and GNP...</b> Near surface and mid pack instability persists in our snowpack</li> </ul>
<b>Comment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Carry and know how to use avalanche safety equipment</b></li> <li><b>Watch for a possible rapid change in weather conditions beyond forecast amounts</b></li> <li><b>Be alert that if a slope is open enough to ski or highmark currently it is very likely an established avalanche path.</b></li> <li><b>Check out the site specific snow stability before jumping in or on</b></li> <li><b>Know that shallow snow packs are notorious for producing trauma injury and death, washing victims over cliffs and into rocks.</b></li> </ul>

## Upcoming Events

Flathead National Forest will also be presenting our advanced public avalanche awareness safety training for skiers, snowshoers, snowboarders, and mountaineers over the first two weeks of January, 2012. The program is a four night lecture series with two Saturday field sessions. Lecture dates are Tuesdays and Thursdays, January 3,5,10,&12. The all-day Saturday field sessions are January 7&14. Lecture location is the Flathead National Forest Supervisors Office on Wolfpack Way.

Kootenai National Forest will be presenting a Level 1 class with the classroom starting at 7PM on Thursday January 12, and the field session starting at 7 AM on Saturday Jan 14. Total time of session is approximately 10 hours. David Thompson SAR is involved and classroom is at their training facility in Libby.